

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 AID-05 SNM-02 DEAE-00 TRSE-00 /062 W

-----301357Z 043519 /53

R 300421Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3243

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 0882

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, BM, TH, US

SUBJ: U.S. HELICOPTERS NOT USED IN BORDER INCIDENT

1. AT BURMESE ARMED FORCES DAY DINNER SUNDAY NIGHT (MARCH 27) I SOUGHT OUT COLONEL TIN OO (PRESIDENT NE WIN'S SENIOR MILITARY ADVISER) TO REITERATE TO HIM THE IMPORTANCE WE ATTACH TO A PRODUCTIVE VISIT BY DR. BOURNE AND MS. FALCO (HE PROMISED FULL COOPERATION AND SUGGESTED WE CONFER AT LENGTH WHEN THE CURRENT SESSION OF THE PYITHU HLUTTAW IS OVER), AND TO MAKE SURE THAT THE U.S.-SUPPLIED HELICOPTERS HAD NOT BEEN EMPLOYED IN THE RECENT ACTION AGAINST KAREN REBELS ON THE THAI BORDER, SINCE WE HAD NO INFORMATION LINKING THESE PARTICULAR REBELS TO THE NARCOTICS TRAFFIC.

2. COL. TIN OO SAID THE BURMA ARMY HAD USED FRENCH-MADE ALOUETTES FOR MEDICAL EVACUATION IN THE RECENT OPERATION (EMBASSY AIR ATTACHE CONFIRMS THAT GUB ARMY HAS USED ALOUETTES FOR MEDEVAC IN PAST). HE ASSURED ME THAT THE U.S.-SUPPLIED AIRCRAFT HAD NOT BEEN USED. THE BURMESE, HE SAID, WERE FULLY AWARE OF THE "STRINGS" TIED TO THE HELICOPTERS UNDER THE EXCHANGE OF NOTES; THEY HAD NOT VIOLATED AND WOULD NOT VIOLATE THE AGREEMENT.

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3. COL. TIN OO POINTED OUT THAT THE POSSIBLE USE OF THE U.S.-SUPPLIED HELICOPTERS IN THE SOUTHERN BORDER AREA WAS NOT EXCLUDED BY THE TERMS OF OUR AGREEMENT; TRAFFICKERS PREVENTED FROM MOVING NARCOTICS ACROSS THE BORDER FURTHER NORTH MIGHT INCREASINGLY REORIENT THEIR ROUTES SOUTHWARD, AND THERE WAS SOME LOW-LEVEL NARCOTICS TRAFFIC ALREADY IN THE AREA. HOWEVER, THE KAREN NATIONAL UNION ITSELF IS NOT A TRAFFICKING

ORGANIZATION, AND COL. TIN OO REITERATED THAT IN FACT THE U.S.-SUPPLIED HELICOPTERS HAD NOT BEEN USED AGAINST THAT ORGANIZATION, OR IN ANY OTHER WAY OUT OF LINE WITH OUR AGREEMENT.

4. LATER THE SAME EVENING, I RAISED THE MATTER AGAIN WITH COLONEL MYO AUNG, DIRECTOR, DEFENSE SERVICES INTELLIGENCE, AND WAS AGAIN ASSURED WITHOUT HESITATION THAT THE U.S.-SUPPLIED HELICOPTERS HAD NOT BEEN USED IN THE RECENT ACTION.

5. COMMENT: HAVING REVIEWED ALL AVAILABLE PERTINENT INFORMATION, THE EMBASSY IS SATISFIED THAT THE U.S. HELICOPTERS WERE NOT USED IN THE RECENT ACTION, AND THAT THE BURMESE ARE CONTINUING FAITHFUL TO THE AGREEMENT. AMBIGUITIES ARE, HOWEVER, INHERENT IN THE OBJECTIVE SITUATION. FOR INSTANCE, GUB ACTION AGAINST TRAFFICKERS IN INSURGENT-CONTROLLED AREAS MUST OF NECESSITY BE INITIATED ON THE BASIS OF BEST-AVAILABLE INFORMATION OR EVEN REASONABLE SUSPICION, RATHER THAN SCIENTIFICALLY VERIFIABLE DATA. IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, A JUDGMENT IS REQUIRED WHETHER THE BURMESE ARE ACTING IN GOOD FAITH. IN THIS CASE, MY JUDGMENT IS THAT THEY WERE.
OSBORN

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